

A

# REVIEW

OF THE

# STATE

OF THE

# BRITISH NATION.

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Thursday, February 16. 1710.

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**W**Hen I first began to print this Paper in *Edinburgh*, I told the Gentlemen on the other Side, that unless I was oblig'd by Necessity, I should not concern this Paper in Personal or Party Reflection.— And I am content to make even the Gentlemen themselves Judges of this Necessity, in the Story now before us

There is a Gentleman, lately an *Episcopal* Minister in the Presbytery of *Brichen*, who being depos'd by the Sentence of the Church of *Scotland*, and put out of the Church he then possess'd, by just and legal Process according to the Constitution of the Place; and after that having intruded, &c. contrary to Law into the same Church and

Manse, has been process'd before the Lords of the Justiciary, and by their Sentence is committed to the Tol-booth in *Edinburgh*.

Now, that the World may see, how the Church of *Scotland* is represented in *England*, and with what Justice she is treated, how she is used in Relation to Fact, and how dishonourably she is insulted, I refer them to the following Paragraph taken out of a known Paper, call'd *Dyer's Letter*— A written Piece of News which is sent abroad in the several Counties in *England*, and which by this Means gives such Ideas of the People and Church of *Scotland*, as is suitable to his Way of representing Things, on Supposition that his Relation is true.

It

It is to be observ'd, that Mr. Dyer omits these Things, (which, I suppose, he knows may be contradicted by every Reader) in such of his Letters as go to Scotland, and that his Letter of the same Date to Edinburgh had none of this Thing in it—neither is it his Custom, when he reflects upon the Scots, either as a Nation or a Church, to let his Letter that goes to Scotland have any Thing of that in it—The Paragraph, I mean, is as follows ;

Edinburgh, Jan: 17. Mr. James Green-shields, the Episcopal Minister, having been for some Months languishing alone in the publick Gaol of this City, the Presbytery has been so gracious to him, tho' they will not release him, as to send one Mr. Skinner another Episcopal Minister to keep him Company. This Mr. Skinner was Ordain'd in the Year 1687, was Minister of Brechin, and Assistant to Dr. Drummond Bishop of that Place; he took the Oaths to King William early, always pray'd for Him and Her present Majesty, and is an excellent Preacher; but his Crime was for being an Intruder into another's Manse, Glebe, &c. and refusing to give Bond conform to the Sentence against him, to forbear the Exercise of his Ministerial Office for ever, in any Part of North-Britain.

This is Dyer's Letter spread about England, and by which the People of England are wheedled, deluded, and brought into a Belief of all the Hardships and Cruelties, which the Party think convenient to suggest upon the Church of Scotland, as if practis'd upon the Episcopal People in Scotland—Whereas in this suggested Case, there is this Misfortune to its Author, That not one Word of all this is true, except only that the Man, Mr. Skinner, is sent Prisoner to the Tol-booth—But as to the rest, he neither was committed by the Presbytery, nor was he the early Taker of the Oaths, or the excellent Preacher, &c. that Mr. Dyer suggests.

But being formerly depos'd for Ignorance and Error—and reject'd as a Jacobite, prosecuted by Law for an Intruder, he was committed upon a Criminal Process by the

Lords of the Justiciary—And that this may appear the plainer, I have here given an Abstract of Mr. Skinner's Case, drawn from the Processes at large, which I have all by me, ready to produce, taken from the Records and Registers of the several Courts where the same were try'd, and which, I presume, will not be deny'd to be true, and which being impartially considered, the Reader will be able to do the Church and Government both equal Justice in the Case—

Mr. John Skinner was by a clandestine Admission enter'd to the Church of Brechin in the Year 1687, to the same Charge which his Father was admitted to long before, and wherein his said Father continu'd till the Year 1691, and was never look'd upon as Minister there, till the said Fathers Death, he being so secretly admitted, that very few knew of it, and his Admission (as it was) was contrary to the Laws and Customs yet in Force, and the Cannons observ'd in the Prelatical Church.

Mr. Skinner having thus officiated as Minister there from the Year 1691, till 1697, then his Charge was declar'd vacant by Order of the Presbytery, conform to Act of Parliament against Non-Jurants, which Act of Parliament expressly saith, that whatsoever Minister shall not take the Oaths betwixt and such a Time, their Charges were *Ipso facto* vacant without any further Sentence, so that the Presbytery's Sentence was according to the Laws of the Land, even tho' his Title had been Good. Upon which Mr. Skinner deserted his ordinary Diet of Preaching, and the Presbytery had peaceable Possession thereof till the Year 1703: At which Time Mr. Skinner intruded and took Possession of the same Diet again at his own Hand, which was the Ground of a Process against him before the Presbytery, Anno 1704; and when Sentence was given by the Presbytery against him, discharging him to preach or exercise the Ministry in that Parish, as having no Pastoral Relation or Legal Title thereto, he declin'd the whole Church of Scotland, and appeal'd to the Queen and Privy-Council. There is one Thing observable, that



that in the Year 1704, The Presbytery (not being fully inform'd as yet of his Error and Insufficiency) did for Peace Sake desire him to confine his Ministry to a Part of the Parish, and leave the other Part of the Parish to the *Presbyterian* Minister, who had been ordain'd there some Time before; but this Mr. *Skinner* refus'd, and said, He had a Call to be Minister of the whole Parish.

Anno 1706, He was process'd before the Privy-Council for Intrusion, but the Witnesses not having come up to prove his deserting his ordinary Diet of Preaching, (which was all that the Privy-Council desired, in order to their passing Sentence against him) the Matter was delay'd at that Time.

Thereafter, the Presbytery being well inform'd, that Mr. *Skinner* did preach Heterodox Doctrine, and discover with such Weakness and Ignorance in his Sermons, that the Generality of his Hearers took Notice thereof; the Presbytery thought themselves oblig'd to form a new Libel against him; both upon the Head of his former Intrusion and Contempt of the Church, and also upon the Head of Error and Insufficiency, prophaning the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, &c. Upon which Libel, when Mr. *Skinner* compar'd to answer thereto, he gave in a Declinature against the Presbytery founded upon the Act of Parliament 1690, which impowers the General Assembly or Visitors appointed by them to try and purge out erroneous, ignorant, &c. Ministers, from which he infer'd, that the Presbytery were not his competent Judges; and upon the Presbyteries sustaining themselves his Judges, he appeal'd to the General Assembly; and the Affair coming before the General Assembly was by them refer'd to the Commission (by his own Desire signify'd to the Committee of Bills in his Petition presented to them thereanent) and the Affair coming before the Commission in August 1709, was by them remitted to the Presbytery, as competent Judges in all the Heads libell'd against him.

But before the Affair came to this Length, it is to be observ'd, That Mr. *Skinner* having given in his Declinature above-mention'd to the Presbytery, he did apprehend, it would stop their Proceedure against him; but he was so far mistaken about the Forms of Church-Discipline, that the Presbytery went on with the Process according to their Duty, and examin'd Witnesses at Diets, to which he was not only cited *apud Acta*, but expressly advertis'd by Order of the Presbytery, who sent their Officer to his House, and requir'd him to attend; and likewise the Moderator, in the Name of the Presbytery at the same Diet, call'd and inquir'd, if any of the Company then present had any Commission or Warrant from him to hear the Depositions; but no Body appear'd, and having found the Charge of Intrusion relevant, they proceeded to Sentence.

Mr. *Skinner* taking no Notice of this Sentence, or of the Laws against Intrusion into Churches, &c. which punish the Offender with Banishment, went on nevertheless to preach, and continu'd to keep Possession by Force, of the said Church-Manse, &c. Whereupon Complaint being made to her Majesty's Advocate—His Lordship caus'd forthwith an Indictment or Criminal Process to be begun against him, upon which he was after a fair Trial before the Lords of the Justiciary found guilty, and their Lordships have committed him Prisoner to the Tol-booth.


This is the true State of the Case of Mr. *Skinner*; and for the Veracity of Mr. *Dyer*, or his Informers, I leave the World to judge of that. This is not publish'd to detect the Man, for really that is worth no Mans while, but to detect the Fraud, and set Matter of Fact right in the Eyes of honest Men, that Truth may not suffer, or the World be impos'd upon.

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